

REMARKS

The Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for reviewing the present application. Please note that Applicants have cancelled claims 3 and 48. Claims 1-2, 4-41, 46-47, 49-86, and 91-93 are currently pending. Independent claims 1 and 46 have been amended in order to make clear that templates are provided to the user based on the type of submission as indicated by the user. This limitation finds support in cancelled claims 3 and 48. No new matter has been added with this amendment. Additionally, the term "employee" has been changed to "user" throughout most of the claims. Support for this amendment can be found in the definition for an employee as defined at Page 5 lines 23-25. Again no new matter has been added.

35 U.S.C. §112

Applicants have amended claim 4 in order to remove the phrase "may be" so as to make the claim definite. With this amendment, it is believed that this rejection is overcome.

35 U.S.C. §102

The office action has rejected claims 1, 28, 46, 61-62, 69, 71, 79, 85, 91-92 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,556,974 to D'Alessandro.

The claims in general are directed to computer implemented submission of a user's suggestion for improving operation of a business. The suggestion is submitted by a user filling out a plurality of templates. At least one of the templates presented to the user is selected according to the type of suggestion. Based upon the user's suggestion as presented in the templates, routing decisions are made to determine who should be provided with the user's submission in the business management.

In contrast the D'Alessandro patent is directed to a survey system. The survey system may be computer implemented and allows user's to access and answer a plurality of predetermined questions. See Abstract. The answers to the survey can be stored in a

database and used to represent the performance of the organization based upon predetermined criteria.

The first and perhaps the most notable distinction is that a user of the D'Alessandro patent fill out forms for the purpose of evaluation, whereas the present invention is directed to submission of a new idea for an organization that can be used to improve the organization. Thus, as shown in Fig. 3 of the D'Alessandro patent, a user answers a series of predetermined questions for determining the current performance of the business. The user in D'Alessandro is never capable of providing a new idea to business management for business improvement as expressed in the present independent claims. In the claimed invention, the user submits a submission for business improvement where the submission is developed by the user using financial information (See claims 5 and 6-12 for example) and forwarded to the proper business manager(s) based upon the content provided in the submission. For example, the type of suggestion and its relationship to a particular business function (e.g. accounting, engineering etc.) or the workload of the managers may be used in determining the proper business manager to review the idea. For example, see claims 13, 15, and 41.

The process is structured so as to force the user to provide sufficient information, including cost savings and financial data for evaluation by a business manager. For example, see claims 18 and 19. Additionally, the system monitors progress in both the submission and review process and provides reminders in order for the submission to receive proper consideration. For example see, claims 83 and 84.

A second distinct feature of the present invention as claimed in the independent claims is that after completing the series of templates the system determines the routing of the idea to business management. Routing requires a decision to be made based on a number of options. The content of the user's submission is the basis for determining the one or more business managers that receive the user's submission. Thus, there are more than one possible end points (business manager) for receiving the user's suggestion. In the Alessandro patent, the survey data 90 is analyzed in an analysis module 140 for the organization, resulting in a data set, such as that shown in Fig. 5. No routing decision is made for routing the survey information submitted by a user to a member of the business management. The analyzed data is collected in a database and may be presented to the

organization as indicated in Fig. 1 by the arrow pointing to the organization 10. See also Col. 6 lines 1-2. However, no routing is contemplated by this arrow.

The office action suggests that the Alessandro patent teaches determining network routing of data to business management based upon entries within the structured response as shown at col. 5 lines 44-59. Applicants respectfully disagrees. In this section of the Alessandro patent, a data gathering interface is described which may incorporate a number of mediums such as wide-area-networks and the Internet. Thus, a user can enter information using, for example, HTML, and the entries will be transmitted through a WAN or the Internet to the database 100. See Col. 5 lines 60-61. The entered data is never routed to business management and further, no routing decision is made based upon the content of the structured response.

Thus, independent claim 1 distinguishes the Alessandro patent. For similar reasons, independent claims 46 and 91 also distinguish the Alessandro patent. Dependent claims 28,61-62,69, 71,79, 85, and 92 are each dependent off of an allowable independent claim and are allowable for at least the same reasons. Claims 2-27, 29-41, 47-60, 63-70, 72-78, 80-84, 86 and 93 were all rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being obvious in view of the Alessandro patent. For the same reasons as stated above, the Alessandro patent does not teach each and every limitation of the independent claims. As a result, these dependent claims can not be obvious in view of the Alessandro patent.

It is believed that all of the claim rejections have been addressed and that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the claims and issuance of a notice of allowance are respectfully requested.

If any matter arises which may expedite issuance of a notice of allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned, at the telephone number given below.

It is believed that no extension of time is required for this application. If this is incorrect, please charge deposit account 19-4972 for any extension. If any additional fees are required for the timely consideration of this application, please charge deposit account number 19-4972.

Respectfully submitted,

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